BATMAN®

by OWSLEY, APARO & De CARLO

432
APR 89
US 75¢
CAN 95¢
UK 50p

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

AND IF HE GETS PAST THE F.B.I.?

TM

DEAD LETTER OFFICE

NIGHT IN GOTHAM CITY...

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BATMAN 432 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Inc., Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 1981, New York, NY 10185. Annual subscription rate $9.00, Canada $11.00 (U.S. funds), all other foreign $19.00 (U.S.). Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives Inc., 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017. (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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THE NICE THING ABOUT THIS BUILDING'S JANITORS IS THEY'RE EXTREMELY PUNCTUAL.

SIX O'CLOCK THIS OFFICE IS *VACUUMED.*

KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU WALK ON A CARPET THAT'S JUST BEEN VACUUMED?

YOU LEAVE A FRESH IMPRINT ON THE OTHERWISE UNIFORMLY-GROOMED SURFACE.

A *TRAIL.*

THE GUN THING. OF COURSE.

YOUR CARRYING A HANDGUN IS EVERY BIT AS STUPID AS YOUR HAVING TRIPPED THIS OFFICE'S *ALARM* WHEN YOU BROKE IN--

--WHOA!

NOT BAD!

KER-RUNCH

NOW WATCH THIS!

KR-ATCH!

MY CAR'S RADIO SCANS THE POLICE BANDS. THE COPS ARE ON THEIR WAY. I JUST HAPPENED TO BE CLOSER.

SO, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT--

--LADY?

YOU KNOW, I COULD *ALMOST* STOMACH THE OUTFIT IF YOU'D TONE DOWN THE ARROGANCE A BIT.

THE NAME'S *KELLY*. MAXINE KELLY. I'M A *P.I.*

THE GUY WHO RENTS THIS OFFICE IS A *LAWYER*--

--MARSHAL REIGER. SNAKE OIL AND SLEIGHT OF HAND. SPECIALIZES IN BARREL BOTTOM CLIENTELE.

YOU TRYING TO IMPRESS ME?

LOSE THE EARS AND I'LL CONSIDER IT.

LEAVING SO SOON?

I TRIPPED THE ALARM. GOTHAM'S FINEST ARE ON THE WAY.

BESIDES, REIGER'S FILES CAN'T HELP ME.

BE A PAL AND PUT THAT BACK, OKAY?

I'LL SEND OVER A *CHECK* FOR THE DOOR

SAUNDERS, WILLIAM

FORTY MINUTES LATER, MAX KELLY ARRIVES AT HER CHELSEA LOFT...

CRIPES.

YOU ARE TRYING TO IMPRESS ME.

YOU BROKE INTO REIGER'S OFFICE, MS. KELLY. IF I'M GOING TO LET YOU WALK, I NEED TO BE VERY SOLIDLY CONVINCED.

SO, *THIS* IS THE CASE YOU'RE WORKING ON...

JOSH WINSTON, ABDUCTED FROM A JULY FOURTH PIER CELEBRATION SEVEN YEARS AGO. HE WAS THREE AT THE TIME, MAKES HIM TEN NOW...

ASSUMING HE'S STILL ALIVE.

THE POLICE PICKED UP A SUSPECT NAMED *SAUNDERS* ON VERY THIN EVIDENCE. THE CASE DIED IN PRE-TRIAL AND SAUNDERS WAS SPRUNG. A YEAR LATER THE COPS PARKED THIS ONE IN THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE.

TINA WINSTON, THE BOY'S MOTHER, HAS HIRED HALF A DOZEN *P.I.'S* TO TRY TO FIND THE BOY. SO FAR, NO SOAP.

AND NOW *YOU*... MAX KELLY-- LADY *PI* WITH A BAD ATTITUDE.

REIGER DEFENDED SAUNDERS AT THE HEARING. I'M CONVINCED SAUNDERS IS THE KEY TO FINDING JOSH.

I NEED TO FIND SAUNDERS. I THOUGHT REIGER'S FILES MIGHT PROVIDE A LEAD.

I DON'T GET IT. THIS CASE IS A LOSER. A DEAD-END. TRAIL'S SO COLD YOU CAN ICE SKATE ON IT.

WHY ARE YOU ON IT--?

SHORTLY, AT GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL...

GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL

HOS ZON QUI

IT'S OKAY, MRS. WINSTON. I'M STILL WORKING ON IT...

...I'LL FIND JOSH. I PROMISE.

WHY LIE TO HER? WHY PROMISE GOODS YOU CAN'T DELIVER?

HOPE IS ALL SHE'S GOT.

THE STRESS OF JOSH'S DISAPPEARANCE HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL ON HER HEALTH. SHE NO LONGER HAS THE *WILL* TO LIVE.

I'LL ASK *YOU*-- HOW COULD I HAVE TURNED THIS CASE DOWN?

DO YOU HAVE ANY *IDEA* WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO LOSE YOUR OWN *SON*...?

LATER, AT COMMISSIONER GORDON'S OFFICE...

...THESE GUYS HAVE MADE SEVEN HITS IN THE PAST MONTH. JUST JEWELS. NO CASH, NO STOCKS, NO GOLD. JUST *ICE*.

WE'VE HAD ONE OF THE GANG UNDER SURVEILLANCE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. THEY'RE GOING TO STRIKE AGAIN... *SOON*.

AND WHEN THEY DO, WE'RE GOING TO *NAIL* THEM.

BATMAN--?

BATMAN!?

I'M LISTENING.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? OUR SIX-MONTH JEWEL HEIST INVESTIGATION OBVIOUSLY ISN'T.

I'LL PASS, JIM.

C'MON, OLD FRIEND. OPEN UP. THE METER'S RUNNING.

JOSH WINSTON.

THREE YEAR-OLD SNATCHED FROM THE PIER SEVEN YEARS AGO. ONE SUSPECT... THE D.A. ROLLED SNAKE EYES IN PRE-TRIAL... THE GUY WALKED... THE CASE DIED.

WHAT ABOUT IT--?

--OH, NO--

TELL ME YOU'RE NOT LOOKING FOR THAT KID.

HE'S *DEAD*, BATMAN. IF YOU'RE MISSING SEVEN YEARS YOU'RE *DEAD*.

THERE'S *NO CASE*, FRIEND.

MEANWHILE, I'VE GOT A REAL-LIVE CASE WITH REAL-LIVE SUSPECTS AND REAL-LIVE EVIDENCE.

I NEED YOUR *HELP*

WHERE'S SAUNDERS--THE KIDNAPPING SUSPECT --NOW?

RELOCATED. NEW NAME, NEW ADDRESS. EVEN *I* CAN'T GET IT.

WHO *CAN?*

STILL LATER...

WWHEEEEE

THE FEDERAL BUILDING, 1660 BROADWAY...

...I REPEAT... EVACUATE THIS BUILDING IMMEDIATELY!

--SMOKE COMING FROM *EVERYWHERE* --CAN'T PIN IT DOWN! SPLIT UP AND DO A FLOOR-TO-FLOOR. MASKS ON AND BE CAREFUL!

THIS IS PROBABLY A TORCH JOB!"

MOMENTS LATER, SEVERAL FLOORS UP...

TWELVE MINUTES--TOPS--BEFORE THEY FIND MY SMOKE CANNISTERS AND REALIZE THE "*FIRE*" IS A *HOAX*.

TWELVE MINUTES. I CAN BUILD A *ROCKET* IN TWELVE MINUTES.

SURELY I CAN CRACK A *SAFE* IN THAT TIME.

THE *FBI* ARE A BUNCH OF UPTIGHT CORPORATE TYPES. THEY RELOCATED SAUNDERS AFTER HE WAS ACQUITTED FOR HIS OWN SAFETY.

EVEN GORDON DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE IS.

BUT *THESE* GUYS KNOW. AND I'M GOING TO MAKE THEM *TELL* ME.

I'VE GOT "LOCKPICK"-- MY PRIVATE SOFTWARE DESIGN--LOADED ONTO HALF A DOZEN SYSTEM DISKS.

ONE OF THEM WILL FIT THE *FBI*'S SYSTEM. THEN LOCKPICK WILL FERRET OUT THE CORRECT PASSWORD AND GET ME IN.

ELEVEN AND TWENTY-SEVEN.

--ROGER, INSPECTOR, I'M CHECKING THE FILE ROOM. LOOKS QUIET ENOUGH UP HERE.

AT LEAST NOTHING'S ON FIRE--JUST *SMOKE*.

--HEY!! *WHAT ARE YOU*--

WOOSH

:UGHNNN!!:

VERY UPTIGHT PEOPLE.

THE PLACE IS ON FIRE AND HE HASN'T EVEN LOOSENED HIS TIE!

HE'LL BE OKAY. HE'LL HATE HIMSELF -- BUT HE'LL BE OKAY.

BLEEP

BINGO. I'M IN.

ALL RIGHT, COMPUTER... OPEN THE SAFE!

NOW, LET'S GET SAUNDERS' ADDRESS.

ELEVEN AND THIRTY-TWO.

SAUNDERS' FILE IS ON A SQUARE OF MICROFICHE. LOOKS LIKE THE INFORMATION'S WRITTEN IN SOME SORT OF CODE.

CODE.

ONLY THE FBI.

MY ESCAPE ROUTE'S THROUGH THE SEWER. GLAD I'VE STILL GOT THE GAS MASK--

--NUTS.

FOUND ONE OF YOUR SMOKE CANNISTERS BEFORE IT WENT OFF, FELLA.

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

RAISE YOUR HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD-

I WAS HOPING TO AVOID THIS.

THESE GAS PELLETS OUGHT TO TAKE SOME OF THE *FIGHT* OUT OF THEM —

BASHING *CRIMINALS* IS ONE THING — BEATING UP ON LAW ENFORCEMENT PEOPLE ALWAYS *DEPRESSES* ME

...AND I'LL *NEED* THIS *GUN*--

— TO TAKE CARE OF THE *CLEANUP*

BLAM!

BLAM!

I'LL BET THE *SEWER* IS CRAWLING WITH *ANGST*

GOT TO GO TO PLAN 'B.'

GUESS WHAT?

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT

THINGS ARE DEFINITELY GETTING *RAD*

GOING TO HAVE TO DO THIS THE *HARD* WAY

I'LL TRY NOT TO HURT ANYONE -

I TAKE BACK WHAT I SAID ABOUT THE FBI. THEY'RE GOOD.

REAL GOOD
HAST E T TME
WIND GUST'S TAKING MY GAS AWAY--
-- AND I'M OUT OF TRICKS
THE NEXT GETS ANY EASIER
MATCH OUT HE'S RACING--
3

--OVER THE

THE WINSTON KID THING?

THAT LINE YOU BROKE INTO FBI OFFICES, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!"

AT LEAST YOU HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO LEAVE THE SUIT AT HOME!

YOU'RE OVER THE LINE ON THIS ONE MARY OVER AND I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU NOW, THAT MAKES ME

BLESS YOU FATHER, FOR YOU HAVE SINNED

I BEG YOUR PARDON, Y' GOD?

THIS IS A CONFESSIONAL, RIGHT? TIME TO CONFESS, WILLIE.

THAT'S YOU-- WILLIE SAUNDERS, FORMER CROOK RELOCATED, REFORMED... SIX YEARS IN SEMINARY...

WHAT... WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?!

I WAS INNOCENT!

YOU NEVER TESTIFIED.

C'MON, WILLIE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS IS UP NOBODY CAN NAIL YOU FOR IT.

I WANT THE BOOK. WHERE'D YOU STASH IT?

I'VE DONE A LOT OF THINGS I REGRET-- BUT THE WINSTON BOY'S KIDNAPPING.

YOU'RE IN CHURCH, FATHER--

SMASH!

--IT'S NOT *POLITE* TO SWEAR!

...HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO, BUT I *DID.*

DON'T YOU THINK I *KNOW* MY JOB, BATMAN? IF I THOUGHT THE [illegible] CASE HAD LEGS I'D NEVER HAVE CLOSED IT

YOU'VE TICKED OFF THE FBI, IGNORED A MAJOR ONGOING INVESTIGATION AND PUT A *BIG* STRAIN ON OUR FRIENDSHIP, JUST TO [illegible]

...WHOM YOU NOW BELIEVE IS [illegible]

YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I THAT [illegible] GET SNATCHED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH *EVERY DAY.* THE WINSTON K D S JUST ONE OF *HUNDREDS!*

HE LOOKS LIKE A *DOZEN* OTHER [illegible] OUT THERE AND IS [illegible] ALIVE--IS FLAT OUT *IMPOSSIBLE!*

THAT'S IT

SO, CAN WE FINALLY PUT THIS DEAD-END CASE TO BED AND GET BACK TO THE JEWEL HEIST--

--BATMAN--?

I HATE IT WHEN HE [illegible]

SAVE THAT TRAUMA COUNSELING FOR YOUR MOTHER.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY

GET AWAY
I NEED YOU

YOU LIE IN A BED WITH THIS SADISTIC RIGHT
BY THE WAY, THE BATMOBILE WAS REAL KINKY

-- THAT JOSH LOOKED LIKE ANY *OTHER* KID HIS AGE. I ACCESSED THE *FBI* FILES AND COMPOSED A LIST OF MISSING KIDS WHO MEET JOSH'S GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

I CAME UP WITH THREE DOZEN NAMES

I'VE TAPPED IN THE COMPUTER MORGUE FILES ON THE COUNTRY'S TOP FIFTY NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES AND DEVELOPED A PHOTO DATA BASE COMPOSED OF THE FAMILIES AND ASSOCIATES OF MY THREE DOZEN MISSING LITTLE BOYS.

GAVE ME ABOUT TWO HUNDRED FACES.

I'VE ALSO LOADED THE PHOTOS JOSH'S PARENTS TOOK THAT JULY FOURTH WEEKEND ON A DISK. THE COMPUTER'S SEARCHING FOR MATCHES BETWEEN THE FACES IN THE PIER CROWD THAT JULY FOURTH

...AND MY TWO HUNDRED FACES. THE MACHINE'S STILL RUNNING, BUT I'VE GOT A HUNCH.

JOSH'S MOM SNAPPED THIS PHOTO DURING A *FIREWORKS* DISPLAY EVERYONE IN THE SHOT-- INCLUDING JOSH--IS LOOKING *SKYWARD*.

EXCEPT THE MAN.

I'M IN A *CAVE* IN THE *MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT* WITH A POINTY-EARED LUNATIC IN GREY TIGHTS.

THAT WOMAN IS AN UNDECIPHERABLE *BLUR!* YOUR THEORY IS THE HOKIEST LOAD OF SHEEP DIP I'VE EVER--

BLEEEP

CONCLUSION

DAWN...

THE COMPUTER BROKE THE SNAPSHOT DOWN TO ITS BASIC ELEMENTS AND *ENHANCED* THE DETAIL.

THEN IT MATCHED THE WOMAN IN THE CROWD TO ONE OF THE TWO HUNDRED.

HOW CAN YOU BE SURE YOU'RE *RIGHT*?

I CAN'T.

THIS WILL NEVER STAND UP IN COURT.

IT WON'T *HAVE* TO.

BY THE WAY, YOU WON'T BE NEEDING THAT.

KLIK

TEN YEARS AGO--THREE YEARS BEFORE JOSH'S ABDUCTION--*THIS* WOMAN'S SON MYSTERIOUSLY VANISHED.

THEY NEVER FOUND HIM.

JOSH WINSTON WAS A DEAD RINGER FOR HER SON.

SO, I'VE GOT THIS *THEORY*...

BUZZ BUZZ

ALL RIGHT! I'M COMING!!

DO YOU HAVE ANY *IDEA* WHAT TIME IT IS..!

...OH...

MOM--?!

MOM... WHY ARE YOU CRY--

-- GOLLY--

THAT AFTERNOON...

MRS. WINSTON... I'VE GOT A *SURPRISE* FOR YOU--

J...JOSH...?

JOSH!!

...JOSH...

TINA WINSTON DIED AT FOUR O'CLOCK.

JOSH DIDN'T KNOW WHO SHE WAS.

WE NABBED THOSE JEWEL THIEVES WITH-OUT YOU.

GUESS I OWE YOU AN APOLOGY.

YOU *KNEW* THAT CASE WAS WORKABLE.

I KNEW *NOTHING.*

I WAS *LUCKY,* JIM. THAT'S ALL.

I'M CALLING IT A DAY.

YOU NEVER ANSWERED MY QUESTION, Y'KNOW-- *WHY* THIS KID?

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE NOT *GOING* TO ANSWER IT, EITHER.

END